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CATHOLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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THE STATUS OF INTEGRATION IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON, D.C. IS REVIEWED. NEGRO CATHOLICS COMPRISE 14 PERCENT OF THE NEGRO POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, YET THE INTEGRATION RATIO IN THE 45 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IS ONLY 30 PERCENT AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL AND 8 PERCENT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL. SOME PROBLEMS IN ACHIEVING RACIAL BALANCE ARISE BECAUSE CATHOLIC INNER-CITY SCHOOLS ARE IN COMPETITION WITH NEIGHBORING PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR WHITE STUDENTS. IN ADDITION, FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS OF JURISDICTION HAMPER INTEGRATION EFFORTS. MAJOR QUESTIONS WITH WHICH THE CHURCH MUST DEAL ARE THE ADEQUACY OF ITS RESOURCES FOR EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION AND ITS CAPACITY TO MODIFY ITS ROLE AS PROSELYTIZER SO THAT NEGRO AND WHITE NON-CATHOLICS MIGHT ELECT TO ATTEND PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "INTEGRATED EDUCATION," VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4, ISSUE 28, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1967. (NH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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port of their compliance with this order of the court.

It is FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED that on October 2, 1967, the defendants file in the record in this case for approval by the court a plan of teacher assignment which will fully integrate the faculty of each school pursuant to the principles announced in the court's opinion and the instructions contained in the part styled REMEDY thereof.

It is FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED that the United States be, and it is hereby, invited to intervene in these proceedings to assist in the implementation of the decree, to suggest amendments to the decree, and to take whatever other steps it deems appropriate in the interest of public education in the District of Columbia. It is FURTHER ORDERED that the United States be served with a copy of this decree in the manner prescribed by Rule 4(d)(4), *Federal Rules of Civil Procedure*. The parties, of course, may suggest amendments to this decree at any time.

J. SKELLY WRIGHT
United States Circuit Judge

[See "Chronicle", above, p. 6]

ED020218

CATHOLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Jane L. Berdes

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"Integration begins at home," the disenchanted Negro's barb at crusading white civil righters, has at last been taken to heart by national leaders of the Roman Catholic parochial schools. Ecclesiastical authorities have launched a formal drive to take Church schools from racial isolation into some form of partnership with public schools in solving the equal education crisis.

The effort was, in a very real sense, made mandatory by the precedent-setting Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which included parochial school students from poverty situations as its beneficiaries. But it also reflects a change of heart among American Bishops concerning the responsibility of the Church to its environs.

The drive is taking two forms: First, the U.S. Catholic Conference's Department of Education has begun a racial census which will examine individual classrooms throughout the country and survey every parochial school teacher; then the National Catholic Education Association will sponsor a national parley next spring in Washington, D.C. The parley's planners hope that the documentation of parochial schools' integration inadequacies will be a basis for putting delegates in a mood to experiment radically with the future of the system.

It is promising that the parley is to be held in the Nation's Capital, scene of the most racially beleagured schools in the nation — public or parochial. Washington is also home base for both the Church's education agencies. For these reasons delegates to the parley would do well to familiarize themselves with the Church's integration crisis at home — in the District of Columbia. Otherwise, the current program to increase

integration in parochial schools cannot be a sound one. It could be instead the straw that broke the back of the 84 year old Catholic-schools.

The status of D.C. public schools has been familiar for at least five years. Negro children now comprise 91.6 per cent of the population, although 90 per cent of these children attend less than half the District's 171 elementary, junior, and senior high schools. This *de facto* segregation plus the obvious antiquity and poor quality of school curriculum and facilities long ago led national Negro spokesmen to clamor unsuccessfully for a complete overhaul of "the most backward place in the nation educationally."

While public schools have become Exhibit A in the nation's ongoing trial to determine the validity of its stated intention to equalize Negroes with whites, it is startling to discover that Washington's Catholic schools have escaped formal scrutiny.

These schools educate 14 per cent of the District's children which fits the national average of one in seven. It is generally believed that parochial schools maintain a 70 per cent Negro enrollment on the elementary level and a 66 per cent on the secondary level. This figure is based on public school attendance records. But, as Washington Archdiocesan School Superintendent Msgr. Thomas W. Lyons frankly pointed out in a recent interview, the public schools' statistics omit substatial numbers of white children who are bussed in from suburban areas to attend District Catholic schools. The integration rate is actually 30 per cent at the elementary level, Monsignor Lyons reported, and eight per cent at the high school level.

Exactly 17,794 students, including 7,250 Negroes, attend the Church's 45 schools here this year. Eighty per cent of Negro grade schoolers congregated in 12 inner-city schools. This left 10 other parochial schools

WASHINGTON, D. C. CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH SIGNIFICANT NEGRO ENROLLMENT

SCHOOL	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	% OF NEGROES	% OF WHITES
Assumption	314	25	75
Holy Comforter	602	99	1
Holy Name	534	100	0
Holy Redeemer	316	100	0
Immaculate Conception	102	100	0
Nativity	493	40	60
Our Lady of Perpetual Help	388	100	0
Our Lady Queen of Peace	641	100	0
Sacred Heart	476	56	44
St. Anthony	494	48	52
St. Benedict	391	100	0
St. Francis de Sales	462	80	20
St. Francis Xavier	678	17	83
St. Gabriel	551	96	4
St. Martin	399	96	4
Sts. Paul & Augustine	373	97	3
St. Peter	370	48	52
St. Theresa	321	25	75

with token integration mainly and four schools which met integration standards. Characteristic of these four, however, was a continuing struggle with nearly public schools over remaining white children in the area.

A typical example is St. Anthony's just outside the poverty area. St. Anthony's has no Negro faculty members. In fact, only two Church schools here do, and both of these are physical education instructors. A salary range that is about $150 lower in scale than that of the public school system partially explains this. St. Anthony's charges $30 tuition per child if a member of the parish, $100 if Catholic but not a member, and $150 per non-Catholic child. It stands next to the Brookline public school which, says St. Anthony principal, tries to woo white children away to boost its own race ratio. Optimistic about the loyalty of her white parents, she still plans, if necessary, "to enroll white Protestants to keep balance."

Another principal of an integrated grade school, Sr. M. Richardine, O.P., of Sacred Heart school, makes the same point. Much of her work, she says, is in encouraging white parents to stay in the area, reminding them of their community duty, emphasizing the value of the experience for the whole family, and helping them overcome the social deprivations incumbent to their situation.

Three of Washington's parochial grade schools and eight or one-half, its high schools are private. This means they are expensive, exclusive, may require future enrollees to be registered at birth, and do not "keep records" on Negro enrollment. Total enrollment in the three private elementary schools is only 446, but more than half of all students in Catholic high schools are in private schools. All schools, however, have now complied with the long-standing chancery directive to desegregate even though it has meant for most sponsoring an annual scouting and scholarship program.

Reliance on separate facilities for Negroes and whites has increased in recent years. In many ways, including a confusing set of terms to define different kinds of Catholic schools, such as "parochial" meaning "private" and "independent" meaning "private-private," the Church has escaped the vitriol heaped on its fellow-erring, *de facto* segregation-prone public counter-part. It has also provided an escape hatch for parents wishing to dodge the school integration issue and for both Negro and white parents wishing to escape the public school catastrophe. In every instance of schools acceptably integrated, the diocese rather than an order of priests, brothers, or sisters, is responsible for that school.

Although the Church in the District is typical of the southern, dual worship-dual education system, it can not be said that it has shirked its responsibility to educate Catholic Negroes who comprise 14 per cent of the Negro population as compared to the overall national average of 3.8 per cent. Washington has long had the third largest number of Negro Catholics caused by 200 years of Maryland slavery and a subsequent century of D.C. migration. But Church officials have relied on specifically Negro-oriented mission orders like the Oblate Sisters of Providence and the Josephite Fathers to minister to them.

Washington Prelate, Cardinal-elect Patrick O'Boyle has been outspoken in support of integration measures since the start of his tenure in 1948 when the archdiocese was created. His experiments prior to the passage of the first Civil Rights Act in 1954 are credited with contributing significantly to the bill's becoming effective. The Archbishop has been handicapped by jurisdictional limitations since most orders have autonomy in operating their own schools. He also has been plagued by shortages of vocations and finances. The cost of recruiting, training, and ordaining one priest has now reached $100,000. Despite many seminary recruitments over the years, there has been only one Negro priest produced by the Washington archdiocese. Ten of the

11 District parishes with the most Negro students enrolled in their schools are bordering on bankruptcy. In an effort to avoid a diocesan-wide fund drive, Archbishop O'Boyle is trying to rally suburban parishes to share in the inner-city financial burdens.

He has a subcommittee to his Pastoral Commission working to discover what the role of the local church should be in the changing society. According to its chairman, C. Joseph Nuesse, a Catholic University sociologist, the subcommittee will look at schools only indirectly. What seems to be the most basic need in parochial school planning is for information. There are no noticeable statistical resources now available, nor are there channels of communication between parishes and schools. This is the main lament of a report given in June to the Archbishop by the year-old Sisters Urban Center, based in the ghetto and directed by a Holy Cross nun, Sr. Marguerite Melathon.

School officials are grateful for federal funds which their schools have received and which amount to $1.89 per child per day. The amount is determined by public school representatives. Funds to operate summer Headstart projects in parishes are no longer available as they were for 10 programs in 1965. Still, the willingness of religious to go beyond classroom traditions and to inspire their white pupils to follow them continues to spread.

> . . . We have no school in Pittsburgh that has more than 50 percent Negro teachers, including those that are 100 percent Negro children.
>
> —Supt. S. P. Marland, March 3, 1967

Another sign of official willingness to change came with the abandoning in 1964 of the requirement that all students in Catholic schools be Catholic. Experiments in eliminating proselytizing are going on elsewhere but District schools continue to insist all students attend religion classes.

The decline in actual numbers of schools here fits the national trend although school population drops are still small. Nine elementary schools have disappeared from the poor sections, six of these within the last six years. Causes vary. Three were closed when their parishes melded with neighboring units to eliminate hopelessly outdated buildings. Another, St. Joseph's — where the teaching Sisters ate in the school basement and slept in its attic, was shut just one month after the Chicago school fire tragedy in 1958. Two others, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Dominic's, lost out to southwest urban renewal although their parent parishes did not. Three other schools have been closed and their study buildings transformed into high schools because of a "lack of school age population."

Monsignor Lyons said that the archdiocese has no plans to close more schools and no plans for building any new ones. Unfortunately, the archdiocese also has no plans for helping poor parishes survive.

Now that Catholic schools have begun their move into the integrated world — in more ways than just racially — there loom mortal questions. Will Church resources be adequate to the challenges Church leaders now may be ready to accept? Is the Church ideologically and financially able to modify its coveted role as proselytizer in order to manage a wider neighborhood educational program? If not, how else can it begin to build communications with the submerged Negro in need of massive help?

It is entirely possible that Catholic schools, poverty-born, poverty-bred, and now mostly poverty-fled, will not survive the effort to reorient them to contemporary, inner-city educational experimentation.

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